The Story of Hrafnkell, Frey's Priest

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Chapter 1

It was in the days of King Harold Fairhair that a man brought his ship to Iceland into Breiðdal, his name being Hallfreðr. Breiðdal is a countryside down below that of Fljótsdalr. On board his ship was his wife and son, who was hight Hrafnkell, who was then fifteen winters old, a hopeful man and a goodly. Hallfreðr set up household. In the course of the winter there died a servant-maid of foreign kin, whose name was Arnthrúðr; hence the name of the place Arnthruðr-staðir. In the spring Hallfreðr moved his house northward over the heath, and set up a home at a place called Geitdalr. One night he dreamt that there came a man to him, and said : "There liest thou, Hallfreðr, and rather unwarily; flit thy house away west across the Lagarfljót, for there all thy good luck awaits thee." Thereupon he awoke and flitted his belongings down valley across Rangá, into the Tongue, to a spot, which has since been called Hallfreðr-staðir, and there he dwelt into a good old age. In breaking up from Geitdalr he had left a goat and a buck behind, and the same day that Hallfreðr left, an earthslip struck the house, and there these two creatures were lost. Hence the name Geitdalr, which this place has borne ever since.

Chapter 2

Hrafnkell made it his wont to ride upon the heaths in the summer-seasons. At this time Jökuldalr was all settled as high as the bridge. Once Hrafnkell rode up along Fljótsdalhérað and saw that a certain void valley stretched up beyond Jökuldalr, which seemed to him to be a better settlement than other valleys which he had seen already. And when he came home, he asked his father to share him out his part in the property, saying, that he was minded to set up house in the valley. This his father granted him, and in the valley he had found, he made an abode for himself, which he called Aðalból. Hrafnkell got him for wife Oddbjörg, daughter of Skjaldúlfr, from Laxárdalr, with whom he begat two sons, the older hight Thórir, the younger Ásbjörn. But when Hrafnkell had hallowed for himself the land of Aðalból, he held a great sacrificial feast, and a great temple, too, he reared up there. Hrafnkell loved no other god before Frey, and to him he made offerings of all the best things he had, going half-shares. Hrafnkell settled the whole of the valley, bestowing lands on other people, on condition of being their chief; and thus he assumed priesthood over them. From this it came to pass that his name was lengthened, and he was called Freysgoði. He was a man of right unruly ways, but a well-mannered man notwithstanding. He asserted the authority of a priest over all the men of Jokuldalr. Hrafnkell was meek and blithe towards his own people, but stern and crossgrained towards those of Jokuldalr, who never got fair dealings with him. He busied himself much with single combats, and for no man did he pay a weregild, and one ever brought him to do boot for whatsoever he might have done.

The country side of Fljótsdalr is a right difficult one to traverse, stony and sloughy. Yet father and son would be constantly riding to see each other, for between them there was much fondness of love. Hallfreðr thought the common way was too difficult of passing, so he sought for a new road above the fells, which stand in the country-sides of Fljótsdalr, where he found a drier one, although a longer, which ever since has been called the "gate" of Hallfreðr. This road is traversed only by those who are well acquainted with the country-sides.

Chapter 3

There was a man named Bjarni, who dwelt at a stead called Langarhús, in Hrafnkelsdalr. He was married, and had begotten sons with his wife, one of whom was called Sámr, the other Eyvindr, goodly men and promising; Eyvindr stayed at home with his father, but Sámr was married, and had his abode on the northern side of the valley at a place called Leikskálar, and was right well off for live-stock. Sámr was a turbulent fellow, and skilled in law withal; but Eyvindr became a traveller, and went to Norway, where he dwelt for the first winter; from there he went abroad into foreign lands, coming at last to a stay in Constantinople, where he was right honourably received by the Greek king, and where, for a while, he spent his time.

Of all his possessions there was one for which Hrafnkell had greater fondness than any other. This was a horse of a roan colour, which he called "Freymane." He gave unto his friend Frey the half of this horse, and so great a love had he for it, that he made a solemn vow that he would kill any one who should ride the horse without his leave.

Chapter 4

A man was hight Thorbjörn, brother of Bjarni, who dwelt at a stead in Hrafnkelsdalr, called Hóll, situated across the valley right against Aðalból, on the eastern side. Thorbjörn was a man of scanty means, but of many useless mouths. The eldest of his sons was called Einarr; he was a tall man and well-mannered withal. It so happened one spring that Thorbjörn said to Einarr that he had better try to secure some place for himself; "for," said he, "I am in want of no more work than can be done by the hands that are here already, but thou wilt find it easy to secure a situation, able and skilful as thou art. It is not for any want of love that I thus call upon thee to go away, for thou art to me the most useful of all my children; but it is because of my small means and poverty; but my other children must grow up labourers, but as for thee, thou wilt find it easier to get a place than they." Einarr answered : "Too late hast thou let me know of this, as now all places and situations, the best of them at least, are already arranged for, and I deem it an undesirable thing to have to accept only the worst." Now Einarr took his horse and rode to Aðalból, where Hrafnkell sat in his chamber, and received him well and joyfully. Einarr applied for a situation with Hrafnkell, and he answered : "Why askest so late for this? otherwise I should have taken thee the first of all men. Now I have secured all my servants, except for that one business which, I fear, thou art not minded to undertake." Einarr asked what it was. Hrafnkell answered, he had got no one to take charge of his sheep, but said he was in great need of one. Einarr said he did not mind what work he did, whether this or any other; but said he would like to settle with him for cloth and board wages. "I'll make a short bargain with thee," said Hrafnkell. "Thy business shall be to watch fifteen ewes at the mountain dairy, and gather and carry home faggots for summer fuel. On these terms thou shalt take service with me for two 'half-years.' But a one thing I must give thee, as all my shepherds, to understand: 'Freymane' goes grazing in the valley with his band of mares; thou shalt take care of him winter and summer; but I warn thee of one thing, namely, that thou never be on his back on any condition whatever, for I am bound by a mighty vow to slay the man that ever should have a ride on him. There are twelve mares with him; whichever one of these thou mayest want, night or day, is at your service. Do now as I tell thee, and mind the old saw: 'No blame is borne by those who warn.' Now thou knowest what I have said." Einarr said he trusted he was under no such luckless spell as to ride on a horse which was forbidden, least of all when there were other horses at his disposal.

Chapter 5

Now Einarr goes home for his clothes, and betakes himself to Aðalból. Thereupon they brought the milking-stock to the mountain-dairy up in Hrafnkelsdalr, which was set up at a place called Grjótteigssel. During the summer all went in a fair way with Einarr, so that never a ewe was missing up to mid-summer; but then, one night, it came to pass that nearly thirty of them had strayed away. Einarr went all over the sheep-walks, searching without finding any, and for nearly a week the sheep were missing. One morning Einarr rose early, and, coming out, found that all the fog from the south and the drizzle had lifted. And so he takes into his hand a staff and a bridle, and a riding-rug. Then he went on, passing Grjótteigsá, which ran above the dairy. On the shingly flats by the river were lying about all the sheep that had been home in the evening before. These he drove home towards the dairy, and then went in search of those that were wanting. He now saw the stud-horses further afield on the flats, and was minded to secure one of them to ride on, knowing that he would cover ground more quickly by riding than by walking: and when he came to the horses, he had to run about after them, they being now shy, though never before they used to run away from any one -- except "Freymane" alone. He was as quiet as if stuck buried in the ground. Einarr, seeing that the morning was passing off, thought that Hrafnkell surely would never know if he rode upon the horse, and so he took it, put on it the bridle, and the riding-rug on his back under himself, and rode up past the gorge of Grjóta, and farther up towards the glaciers, then along the "jökul," beneath whick Jökulsá runs, and then down along the river unto the dairy of Reykir. He asked all shepherds at the sundry dairies if any of them had set their eye upon the sheep, but no one professed to have seen them. Einarr rode "Freymane" from the first streak of dawn until middle eve, and the horse took him quickly over the ground and far, for it was the best of horses. Then it came into Einarr’s mind that it was time already to drive home to the dairy the sheep which were still in safe keeping, letting alone those that he could not find. So he rode to the eastward over the mountain-necks into Hrafnkelsdalr. But as he came down by Grjótteigr, he heard the bleating of sheep along the river-gorge, even where he had ridden close by before; and turning thither, sees how thirty ewes come running along towards him, even the very ones which had been missing for a whole week already, and these, with the rest of the ewes, he drove along home to the dairy. The horse was all foaming with sweat, so that every hair on him was dripping; bespattered he was all over with mire, and mightily blown. Twelve times he rolled himself, and then he set up a mighty neighing, and then set off at a swift pace down along the beaten tracks. Einarr ran forthwith after him, endeavouring to overtake him, and to lay hand on him and bring him back to the horses. But now "Freymane" was so shy, that Einarr could get nowhere near him. Thus the horse ran down all along the valley, never stopping until it came home to Aðalból. At the time Hrafnkell sat at table, and when the horse came before the door it neighed aloud. Hrafnkell told one of the handmaidens who were serving at table, to go to the door, "for I heard the neighing of a horse, and meseemed the neighing was like to that of ’Frey-mayne.’" She went out to the door, and there beheld "Freymane" in a most ungainly plight. She told Hrafnkell that "Freymane" stood outside the door most ill-favoured of look. "What is the matter with the champion that he should come home as at this time," says Hrafnkell; "sure that bodes no good." Then he went out and saw "Freymane," and spoke to him: "I am sorry to see thee in this kind of plight, my pet; however, thou hadst all thy wits about thee in thus coming to let me know what is the matter; due revenge shall be taken for this, and now thou mayest go back to thy company." And forthwith "Freymane" walked up the valley again to join the stud.

Chapter 6

In the evening Hrafnkell went to his bed as usual, and slept through the night. In the morning he had a horse brought home to him, and ordered it to be saddled, and rode up to the dairy. He rode in blue raiment: he had an axe in his hand, but no other weapons about him. At that time Einarr had just driven the ewes into the pen, and lay on the wall of the pen, casting up the number of the sheep; but the

women were busy a-milking. They all greeted Hrafnkell, and he asked how they got on. Einarr answered: "I have had no good speed myself, for no less than thirty ewes were missing for a week, though now I have found them again." Hrafnkell said, he had no fault to find with tilings of that kind; "It has not happened so often as might have been expected, that thou hast lost the ewes. But has not something worse befallen than that? Didst thou not have a ride on ’Freymane’ yesterday?" Einarr said he could not gainsay that utterly. "Why didst thou ride on this horse which was forbidden thee, while there were plenty of others on which thou art free to ride? Now this one trespass I should have forgiven thee, if I had not used words of such earnest already. And yet thou hast manfully confessed thy guilt." But by reason of the belief that those who fulfil their vows never come to grief, he leaped off his horse, sprang upon Einarr, and dealt him his death-blow. After that, having done the deed, he rode home to Aðalból and there told these tidings. He got him another shepherd to take charge of the dairy. But he had Einarr’s dead body brought westward upon the terrace by the dairy, and there set up a beacon beside his cairn; and it is called Einarr’s beacon, where, when the sun is right above it, they count mid-eve hour (six o’clock) at the dairy.

Chapter 7

The news of Einarr, his son’s, death, was brought over to Thorbjörn at Hóll, and he was mightily grieved at the tidings. He now took his horse, and rode over to Aðalból to ask Hrafnkell to do boot for his son. Hrafnkell said that he had slain many a man beside this one; "for thou must know that I never pay weregild to any man, and yet people have to rest content with things so done. Yet I allow it, that I think that this my deed is rather of the worse kind among the manslaughters which I have wrought hitherto; thou, too, hast been a neighbour of mine for a long while, and I have had a good liking for thee, and we have enjoyed one another’s favour; and no small tiling would have brought matters to an evil pass between me and Einarr, if only he had not ridden this horse; but now I have to regret that I spoke too much; and seldomer, indeed, should we have to regret that which we say too little than that which we say too much, and now I shall show that I consider this deed of mine a worse one than other deeds that I have done, inasmuch as I will supply thy house with dairy-produce during the summer, and with slaughtered meat when autumn comes; and in the same way I will do to thee as long as thou art minded to keep a house. Thy sons and daughters we shall fit out at my cost, and so endow them, as to make their conditions desirable. And all that thou knowest my house to contain, and of which thou mayest stand in need in future, thou shalt let me know of, nor henceforth shalt thou be in want of those things which may be requisite unto thee. Thou shalt keep house as long as thou takest pleasure therein, but when thou art tired thereof, thou shalt come to me, and I will take care of thee unto thy dying day. Let this be our atonement; and likely, it seems to me, that most people will say, that this man was dearly paid for." "This offer I will not accept," says Thorbjörn. "What then?" says Hrafnkell. Then spake Thorbjörn: "I will, that we name an umpire between us." Answered Hrafnkell: "Then thou holdest thyself as good a man as I; the peace between us is at an end." Then Thorbjörn rode away, and down along Hrafnkelsdalr. He came to Langarhus, and met his brother Bjarni, and told him the tidings, asking him at the same time to lend him a hand in these matters. Bjarni answered, saying that Hrafnkell was his equal to deal with; "for though we have plenty of money to dispose of, we are not the men to plunge into a strife with such a man; and sooth, indeed, is the old saw; ’Know one thing, know thyself!’ He has made lawsuits difficult for many a one who have been mightier men of their hands than we are; and it seems to me that thou hast been somewhat short of wits in refusing such a good offer, and I will have nothing to do with this." Thorbjörn overwhelmed his brother with abuse, saying that there was in him the less of manhood, the more he was to be depended upon. So he rode away, and the two brothers parted in little love. He did not stop until he came down to Leikskálar, where he knocked at the door, and people answered the knock and came out. Thorbjörn asked Sámr to come out and see him. Sámr greeted his kinsman well, and asked him to put up there. Thorbjörn answered it slowly somewhat. Seeing that Thorbjörn was downcast, Sámr asked him for tidings, and

Thorbjörn told him the slaughter of his son Einarr. "That is no great tidings," said Sámr, "if Hrafnkell slays a man." Thorbjörn asks if Sámr was minded to lend him any help: "for such is the nature of the case, that though the man is nearest and dearest to me, yet the blow has been dealt no way from malice." "Hast thou tried to have any redress of Hrafnkell?" said Sámr. Thorbjörn told all truthfully as to what had passed between him and Hrafnkell. "Never before did I know Hrafnkell to make such offer to any man, as those he has made to thee," says Sámr. "Now I will ride with thee up to Aðalból, and let us come before Hrafnkell in a humble mind, and see if he will still hold to the same offers; and I doubt not that he will behave honourably in the matter." Says Thorbjörn: "This is to be said, both that Hrafnkell will now refuse, and that such is no more in my mind now than it was when I rode away from there." Sámr says: "Heavy enough, I guess, will it be to strive with Hrafnkell in matters at law." Thorbjörn answers: "That is why ye young men never come to aught, that you flinch at all things, and I am minded to think that no man has got such milksops for kinsmen as I have. It seems to me that a man like you is putting himself in a right false position, being skilled in law and eager for petty cases, but refusing to take up this case, a great and urgent one. Thou shalt be widely reviled for this, as, indeed, thou deservest, being known as the most boisterous man in our kin. And I now see how the matter turns." Sámr answered: "By how much art thou the better off than before, even if I should take up the case, and we should both be worsted together?" Thorbjörn answered: "It would be a great relief to my mind, if thou shouldst undertake it, no matter how after that it should turn out." Sámr said: "I am right unwilling to engage in this, and it is only for the sake of kinship that I do it; but thou must know, that in thee I deem that I have no avail of any kind." Then Sámr gave his hand, and took the case off Thorbjörn’s hand.

Chapter 8

Now Sámr took a horse, and rode up the valley unto a certain stead, where he declared the manslaughter, and after that he gathered men against Hrafnkell. Hrafnkell heard of this, and thought it a laughable affair that Sámr should have undertaken a blood-suit against him. And thus the winter and the next summer pass away. When the days of the summonses pass by, Sámr rode away from home up to Aðalból, and summoned Hrafnkell for the manslaughter of Einarr. After that he rode down the valley, and called upon the goodmen to come to the "Þing." Hrafnkell, too, sent messengers down along Jokuldalr and charged his men to come; and thus from his own jurisdiction he brought together seventy men. With this band he rode eastward over Fljótsdalshérað, across it past the upper end of the water, then straight across the neck unto Skriðudalr, and up along the same valley and south unto Öxarheiði on the way to Berufjörðr and the straight "Þing" road to Siða. From Fljotsdalr there are seventeen days’ journey unto Þingvellir. Now when Hallfreðr had ridden away from the country-side, Sámr gathered men together, and most of those that he brought together, and who formed his following, were only country tramps; unto these men Sámr gave both weapons and clothes and victuals. Sámr struck another route out of the valley. He first went north to the bridge and then over the bridge, and thence unto Moðrudalsheiði, putting up at Moðrudalr for the night. Thence they rode unto Herðirbreiðstunga, and so on above Bláfjöll, and thence into Króksdalr, and so southward unto the Sand, until they came down unto Sauðafell, whence unto Þingvöll, where Hrafnkell had not arrived as yet, the reason of his slower travelling being the longer road he had to do. Sámr tilts a booth for his men, but nowhere near where the Eastfirth-men were wont to tilt. Now shortly after this Hallfreðr arrived and tilted his booth as had been his wont here before. He heard that Sámr was at the "Þing," and that he found right laughable. The "Þing" was a very crowded one, and at it there were most of the lords of the land. Sámr went to all the chieftains, asking them for help and avail, but they all answered one way, saying each that they had nothing good to requite Sámr so as to join him in strife at law against priest Hrafnkell and thus to hazard their honour. They also say that most of those who ever had contentions at law with Hrafnkell had fared one way; that in all such cases as had men set up against him, he had worsted them all. Sámr went home to his booth, and in a downcast frame of mind; the two

kinsmen were misdoubting that their affairs would come to such an utter downfall, as that they would only reap from it shame and disgrace, and in so deep an anxiety were both of them fallen, that they might have no enjoyment either of food or sleep, because all the chieftains refused all assistance to them, even those upon whose help they had counted most.

Chapter 9

It so fell early one morning, that the old carl Thorbjörn was awake; he roused Sámr from his sleep and bade him stand up, "for now it behoves not to slumber." Sámr stood up and put on his raiment. They went abroad, walking down to Oxará below the bridge, where they washed themselves. Thorbjörn spake to Sámr, "It is my counsel now, that thou cause our horses to be driven up, and that we get ready to return home, for it is easy to see that here nothing is awaiting us but utter shame." Sámr answered: "That is well enough, since thou wouldst hear of nothing but striving with Hrafnkell, and didst not choose to accept offers that many a man, who had lost a near kinsman, would have been fain to take. With hard reproaches thou didst egg on my mind, doing the same to others, who were not willing to enter the case with thee. But as for me I shall never give in, until I deem that all hope is past of my ever being able to bring things further about." This came so close home to Thorb-jörn, that he wept. Then they saw how, on the western side of the river, only a bit further down than where they were sitting, five men walk together out of a certain booth. He who was at the head of them, and walked abreast of them, was a tall man, not of a stout build to look at, arrayed in a leaf-green kirtle, in his hand a sword ornamented; a straight-faced man he was, and ruddy of hue, and of a goodly presence, light-auburn of hair, which was fast growing hoary. This was a man easy to know, as he had a light lock in his hair on the left side. Then Sámr spake: "Stand we up, and go we west across the river to meet these men." Now they went down along the river, and the leader of those men is the first to greet them, asking them who they were, to which they answered as asked. Sámr asked this man for his name; he said he was named Thorkell, and was the son of Thjostar. Sámr asked where his family was, and where he had got a home. The other said he was a West-firther by kin and origin, and that his abode was in Thorskafjörðr. Questioned Sámr: "Art thou a man of a priesthood?" "Far from it," said the other. "Art thou a bonder then?" said Sámr. He said that was not so. Sámr asked: "What of a man art thou then?" He answered: "I am only a country tramp. I came out here last summer, having been for seven winters abroad, having fared all the way to Constantinople, being now a henchman of the King of the Greeks, and at this time staying with my brother, whose name is Thorgeirr." "Is he a man of a priesthood?" said Sámr. Thorkell answered: "A man of a priesthood he is indeed, both in Thorskafjörðr and wide about elsewhere in the West-firths." "Is he here at the Þing?" said Sámr. "To be sure," said Thorkell. "How many men has he got with him?" said Sámr. "About seventy men," said Thorkell. "Are there more of ye brothers?" said Sámr. "A third one still," says Thorkell. "Who is he?" says Sámr. "He is hight Thormoðr," says Thorkell, "and dwells at Garðar on Álptanes, and is married to Thórdís, the daughter of Thórólfr Skalla-grimsson of Borg." "Art thou minded at all to bear us a hand?" says Sámr. "What is it you want?" says Thorkell. "To be backed up by the might of chieftains," says Sámr, "for we have affairs at law on hand against Hrafnkell the priest, for the manslaughter of Einarr Thorbjarnar-son; and if thou shouldst back us up, we, as plaintiffs, are confident of the case." Thorkell answered: "As I told you, I am not a man of a priesthood." "Why art thou so stinted of thy share," said Sámr, "being the son of a chieftain like the rest of thy brothers?" Thorkell answered: "I did not say that I was not possessed of a priesthood, but I handselled to my brother Thorgeirr my rule of men before I went abroad; and since my return I have not resumed it, because I deem it well cared for, while he takes charge of it. Go ye to meet him, and ask him to look to you; he is a lordly-minded man, and a noble-hearted, and in every way of good conditions; a young man too, and ambitious withal. Such are the likeliest men to yield the assistance ye want." Sámr says: "We shall get nothing out of him unless thou backest up our suit as well." Thorkell answers: "I will promise to be rather with than against you, as it seems to me the necessity is urgent, that a suit should be brought on for a close

relative. Go ye now to the booth, and go ye into the booth, now that all men are asleep; ye will see, where there stands, athwart the upper part of the floor, a couple of sleeping-bags, out of one of which I have just arisen, and in the other of which there is resting still Thorgeirr, my brother. Since he came to the ’Þing’ he has suffered much from a suppurated foot, and has therefore slept little a-night, but last night, the boil burst, and the core is out: since that he has been asleep, and has stretched the foot from under the clothes out over the foot-board for relief from over-heat. Let the old man go first, and let him go up the booth. It seems to me that he is a right decrepit old fellow, both as to sight and as to age. Now, my man," says Thorkell, "when thou comest up to the sleeping-bag, take care to trip hard and come flopping down upon the footboard, and catch in the fall at the toe which is bandaged, and pull at it, and just see how he likes it." Sámr said: "No doubt that thou art a man of wholesome counsel to us, but this seems to me hardly a wise thing to do." Thorkell answered: "One of two things you must do -- to take what I advise, or not to come to me for a counsel at all." Sámr spake, and said: "As he has counselled, so the thing shall be done." Thorkell said that he would come on later, "for I am waiting for my men."

Chapter 10

Now Sámr and Thorbjörn went away and came into the booth, where all men were asleep; they soon saw where Thorgeirr was lying. The old carl Thorbjörn went first, and in a stumbling manner he walked. But when he came up to the sleeping-bag, then he stumbled on to the footboard and clutched at the sore toe and pulled hard at it, while Thorgeirr woke and jumped up in the sleeping-bag, and asked who he was who was going on so headlong as to rush upon people’s sore feet. But Sámr and his men had nothing to say for themselves; but in the same moment Thorkell sprang into the booth and said to Thorgeirr his brother: "Be not so hasty and furious, kinsman, about this; it will do thee no harm, and people often do by chance things worse than they would; and to many a man it has happened to be unable to have his eye on all things, when his mind is overloaded with great things. No wonder, kinsman, that thou shouldst be so hurt in thy foot which has so long been painful, and, indeed, that pain pinches thyself sharpest. But even so it may be, that no less painful to an old man is the death of his son, for whom he can get no redress, being moreover a man pinched by every kind of want. No doubt he knows best his own pain, and it is not to be wondered at that he should not be very heedful of all tilings, in whose mind mighty things are abiding." Thorgeirr answered: "I did not know that he was to hold me responsible for this, for I did not kill his son, and he cannot therefore revenge this on me." "He nowise minded to be avenged on thee," says Thorkell, "but he came to thee at a faster pace than he could help, and paid for his dimness of sight in his eager hope of finding some support in thee. And a noble deed it would be to lend one’s help to an old and needy man. This is to him a matter of necessity, not of choice, seeing that it is his son, after whom he has to take up the suit. But now all the chieftains back out of all help to these men, and show therein a great want of great-mindedness." Thorgeirr answered: "Against whom have these men the plaint to bring?" Thorkell answered: "Hrafnkell the priest has slain the son of Thorbjörn, sackless. One deed after another he works, never allowing redress to any one therefor." Thorgeirr answered: "I shall, belike, fare the way of others, in not finding that I have any such good deed to requite to these men, as that I should go willingly into law struggles with Hrafnkell. For it seems that every summer he deals with those who have got cases to contest with him, so that most of them get little or no honour thereof in the end. In this way I have seen them fare every one. This, I guess, must be the cause why most men are so unwilling, whom necessity does not urge along." Thorkell answered: "It may be, if I were a chieftain, that I should fare in the same way, and that I should deem it ill to have to strive with Hrafnkell, but as I am, I look on that matter otherwise, for I should above all things choose to deal with such a man before whom all men had come to grief already; and greatly should I deem that my honour had advanced, or the honour of any chieftain, by Hrafnkell being brought into some straits; whereas, I should deem it undiminished if I fared no worse than others, as the proverbs say, ’Tis not my curse what’s common fate,’ and

’nothing venture, nothing gain.’" "Now I see," says Thorgeirr, "how thy mind stands in the matter; thou wilt lend these men thy assistance. Now I shall hand over to thee my priesthood and my rule of men, and have thou that which I have had before, but after that we go even shares, and now thou back up whomsoever thou choosest" Answered Thorkell: "It seems to me that our priesthood will be best looked after by being longest in thy hands; and I should like no one better to have it than thee, for thou hast many things to make thee a man above all of us brothers, whereas I have not made up my mind as to what I shall do with myself as at this time. Thou knowest, kinsman, that I have meddled in few things since I came to Iceland. I shall see what my counsels are held worth, for now I have pleaded this cause all I can at present. May be that Thorkell Leppr may come forward hereafter in such a manner as that his words may be held of greater account." Thorgeirr answered: "I see now, kinsman, how the matter stands, that thou art not pleased, which I cannot bear to think of, so we will lend these men our assistance if it be thy will, whatsoever end the affair may have." Thorkell answered: "Therefore I asked that it is my pleasure that the request be granted." "What do these men consider themselves able to do?" says Thorgeirr, "so that thereby the success of their case may be better insured?" "As I said before today," said Sámr, "we want the assistance of chieftains, but the pleading of the case is in my hand." Thorgeirr said that it was then for him to show what he was good for: "And now the thing to be done is to start the suit in the most correct manner. But methinks it is Thorkell’s will that you come to meet him before judgment fall; and then ye will have something for your pertinacity -- either some comfort, or otherwise a humiliation still greater than before, and grief and heartburn. Now go ye home and be merry, for if ye are to strive with Hrafnkell it behoves you to bear yourselves well and straightly for a while. But let no man be told that we have promised you any support." Now they went home to their booth and bore themselves right merrily. People wondered much at this, how they had so suddenly come to change their mind, seeing how downcast they were when they went away.

Chapter 11

And now they sit quietly until the time when judgments were to be passed. Then Sámr called together his men and went to the Mount of Laws, where the court was set. Then Sámr came boldly forth to the court; calling witnesses forthwith, he pleaded his cause in a manner good in law against Hrafnkell the priest, without making mistakes and with a frank and fearless manner of pleading. Then came up the sons of Thjóstar with a large following of men, all men from the west country joining them, whereby it was seen how well befriended the sons of Thjóstar were. Sámr pleaded the cause unto judgment, until Hrafnkell was called upon to defend, or then he who should be there present who should come forward to keep up law defence for him, according as might be good and right in law. Sámr’s pleading was received with good cheer, and the question was put whether no one would bring forward a lawful defence on behalf of Hrafnkell. People rushed to the booth of Hrafnkell and told him what was doing. He started quickly, calling together his men, and went to the court, thinking that there would be but a poor "defence of the coast," and thinking in his mind how he should make small men loth to set up cases against him ; and was minded to break up the court for Sámr and to hustle him out of the case. This, however, was not to be done now; there being already there such a crowd of people that he could get nowhere near; and so was himself hustled away with great violence, even so that he could not hear the speaking of those who pleaded against him, and therefore was deprived of means to bring forward a lawful defence on his own behalf. But Sámr pushed the suit to the full extent of law, until Hrafnkell, at this very "Þing," was made full outlaw. Hrafnkell went forthwith to his booth and had his horses brought up and rode away from the "Þing" mightily ill-contented at the end of these affairs, for such he had never before experienced. So he rode east, over Lyngdalsheiði and further on to Siða, and did not halt travelling until he came to Hrafnkelsdalr, and settled in his home at Aðalból. He behaved as if nothing had happened. But Sámr remained behind at the "Þing," going about and bearing himself right struttingly. Many people thought it well that the case should have come about in this way, and that Hrafnkell should have to come down once in a way, calling now to mind how many people he had

dealt with unfairly before.

Chapter 12

Sámr waited until the "Þing" broke up, and men got ready to return home. He thanked the brothers well for their assistance, and Thorgeirr asked Sámr, laughingly, how he was pleased at the turn matters had taken? He signified his pleasure thereat; but Thorgeirr asked: "Deemest thou thyself now in any better case than before?" Sámr said: "Methinks that Hrafnkell has had a right great shame of this, such as shall be long remembered, and I deem it to be worth as much as a great lot of money." Thorgeirr said: "A full outlaw the man is not yet, as long as the act of distress has not been executed, which must be done at his own home, not later than a fortnight after ’Wapentake’ " (but it is called Wapentake when all men ride away from the "Þing"). "But I guess," said Thorgeirr, "that Hrafnkell is come home, and means to sit at Aðalból, and I also hold likely that he will have taken to himself thy rule over men. But thou, I guess, art minded to ride home and to settle at thy house as best thou mayest, if such be possible. I guess, too, that thou deemest thou hast so brought about thy affairs as to declare him an outlaw, but I am minded to think that he will overawe people in the same manner as before, excepting that, as for thyself, thou wilt have to stoop even lower than ever." "That I never mind," said Sámr. "Thou art a brave man," said Thorgeirr, "and I think that my kinsman, Thorkell, is minded not to let it come to a poor end with thee, having made up his mind to accompany thee until a settlement of thy case with Hrafnkell be brought about, so that thou mayest sit at thy home in quiet. And thou, too, wilt think that it is most due to us now to give thee our support, since already we had the most to do in thy affairs. Now for this once we shall accompany thee to the Eastfirths; but art thou acquainted with any road thither which is not a highroad?" Sámr said he would go back the same way he had come from the east, and was now right glad at this offer.

Chapter 13

Thorgeirr selected the best men from his band, and charged forty of them to accompany him. Sámr, likewise, had forty men in his following, and the whole band was well fitted out, both as to weapons and horses. So they rode all along die same way until they came into Jokuldalr one night, as the fire of dawn was first lighting. They passed over the bridge on the river in the very morning when the act of distress was to be executed. Then asked Thorgeirr how they could best come there unawares; for this Sámr said he had a good advice. And out of the road he turned and up to the mountain side, and so along the neck, between Hrafnkelsdalr and Jokuldalr, until they came to the outer spur of the mountain, beneath which stood the homestead of Aðalból. There some grassy deans stretched up into the heath and a steep slope stretched down into the valley, underneath which was the farmstead. Then Sámr got off his horse and said: "Let our horses be loose and be guarded by twenty men, while we, sixty together, rush upon the stead, where, I guess, few people will be upon their feet as yet." Now they did so, and there the deans are called horse-deans unto this day. They were swiftly upon the farm. The time for rising was past, and yet the people had not got up. They broke the door open by a beam and rushed in. Hrafnkell lay in his bed, and him, together with all his housecarls, those who were able to bear weapons, they made prisoners; but women and children they drove all into one chamber. On the lawn there stood a storehouse, between which and the hall there was laid a beam for drying clothes on; unto this storehouse they brought Hrafnkell and his men. He made many offers for himself and his people; but when that was not heeded, he asked the life of his men to be spared, "for they have done nothing to offend you; but it is no shame to me to be killed; and from that I beg not to be excused; only ill-treatment I pray to be spared, for that is no honour to you." Thorkell said: "We have heard, that hitherto thou hast not let thyself be easily led by thy enemies, and it is now well that thou shouldst take a lesson for it to-day." Then they took Hrafnkell and his men, and tied their hands behind their back; whereupon they broke up the storehouse, and took down from pegs some ropes hanging therein ; and

next they took out their knives, making slits through their hough sinews, drawing therethrough the ropes which then they slung over the aforenamed beam, and there tied them up, eight together. Then said Thorgeirr: "Now thou hast been brought to such a plight, Hrafnkell, as thou deservest, unlikely as thou wouldst have deemed it, that thou shouldst ever have received such a shame at any man's hands as now has come to pass. Now which wilt thou do, Thorkell, sit here beside Hrafnkell and watch them, or go outside the farmstead with Sámr within the distance of an arrow shot, and there execute the act of distress on some stony knoll where there be neither field nor meadow." (This was to be done at the time when the sun was in due south.) Thorkell answered: "I will sit there beside Hrafnkell, and thus have less to do." Then Thorgeirr and Sámr executed the act of distress. Now after this they walked home and took down Hrafnkell and his men, and set them down in a field; and then blood had already filled their eyes. Then said Thorgeirr to Sámr that he should now deal with Hrafnkell as he liked, "for meseems it is now a matter of small difficulty to deal with him." Then answered Sámr: "Two choices are set before thee, Hrafnkell; one to be taken outside the stead, together with those of thy men that I choose, and to be slaughtered; but whereas thou hast a great number of useless mouths to provide for, I will allow thee to look thereto. So the second choice is, if thou wilt have thy life, that thou betake thyself from Aðalból with all thy folk and with so much money only as I share to thee, which shall be mighty little; but I shall settle on thy property and have the rule of all thy men; and to neither shalt thou ever raise a claim, nor thy heirs, nor shalt thou ever live nearer this place than somewhere to the east of Fljotsdalsherað; and this thou mayest handsel me if thou art ready to accept it." Hrafnkell answered: "Many a man would think a swift death better than such hard dealings, but, belike, I shall fare after the manner of many, 'that life be chosen while choice there is;' which I do, mostly because of my sons, for theirs will be a scanty prospect if I die from them." Then Hrafnkell was let loose and he handselled self-doom unto Sámr. Sámr allowed Hrafnkell so much of the wealth as he chose, which was a slight portion indeed. His spear Hrafnkell retained, but no weapon besides; and this very day he betook himself from Aðalból together with all his folk. Then said Thorkell to Sámr: "I wonder at thy doing this, for no man will regret more than thyself having given Hrafnkell his life." Sámr said that could not be helped now.

Chapter 14

Hrafnkell brought his household east over Fljótsdals-herað and right across Fljótsdalr unto the eastern side of Lagarfljót. At the bottom of that water stood a small stead, which was called Lokhylla. This land Hrafnkell bought on credit, for his means went no further than to cover the cost of household implements. People had much talk about this, how Hrafnkell's masterfulness had suddenly come down to nought; and many a man now recalls the ancient saw: "Short is the age of over-boldness." This was a good woodland and large in extent, but the house was a poor one, and therefore he bought the land at a low price. But Hrafnkell spared no cost; he felled the wood, which was large, and raised there a lofty abode, which since has been called Hrafnkelsstaðir, and has always been accounted of as a good stead. During the first seasons Hrafnkell lived there in battle with hard distress. He had much ado in storing his home with fish. He went much about common labour while the stead was being built. The first half-year he embarked on the winter with one calf and one kid. But it turned well out for him, so that nearly everything lived in the way of live stock, which was added to it; and it might be said that nearly every creature was with two heads. That same summer there happened to be a large catch in Lagarfljót, which brought the householders of the country-side many a comfort, and this held on well every summer.

Chapter 15

Sámr set up his house at Aðalból after Hrafnkell, and set up a great banquet there, and invited to him all those who formerly had been Hrafnkell's retainers. Sámr offered to be the lord over them instead of Hrafnkell, and they accepted the offer, although they had various misgivings about the matter. The sons of Thjóstar counselled him to be bounteous of his money, and helpful to his men, and a support to whomsoever might be in want; "And then they are not men if they do not faithfully follow thee in whatsoever thou mayest stand in need of. But this we counsel thee, therefore, that we should like to see thee successful in all things, for thou seemest to us to be a stalwart man. Now take care of thyself and be wary of thy ways: 'for evil foes 'tis hard to heed.'" The sons of Thjóstar sent for "Freymane" and the stud; said they would like to see the beasts of which there were so many stories abroad. Then the horses were brought home and they were viewed by the brothers. Thorgeirr said: "These horses seem to me to be serviceable to the household, and it is my counsel that they be made to work all they can in the service of man until they can live no longer by reason of old age; but this horse 'Freymane' seems to me no better than other horses, nay, the worse, indeed, that he has brought many an evil thing about; and I will not that he be the cause of any more manslaughters than he has been already, so it is fittest that he be received by him who owns him." Now they led the horse down the field. Beside the river there stood a precipitous rock, and below it there was a deep eddy in the river, and so they led the horse forth unto the rock. The sons of Thjóstar wound a certain cloth over the head of the horse, tied a stone round his neck, and thereupon seized long poles wherewith they thrust the horse over the precipice and destroyed him so. Sithence this rock is called Freymane's Rock. Above it stands the temple which Hrafnkell had had. Thorkell wished to come there, and he let strip all the gods, and after that he set the temple on fire and burnt there up everything together. After that the guests prepared to leave, and Sámr presented the brothers with things most precious, and they bespoke a firm friendship between them, and thereupon parted the best of friends. After this they rode west to the firths and arrived in Thorskafjörðr in great honour. Sámr settled Thorbjörn in the house at Leikskálar, where he was to keep house; but the wife of Sámr went to his house at Aðalból where he farmed for a while.

Chapter 16

The news was brought east into Fljótsdalr, to Hrafnkell, that the sons of Thjóstar had destroyed "Freymane" and burnt the temple. Then said Hrafnkell: "I deem it a vain thing to believe in the gods," and he vowed that henceforth he would set his trust in them no more. And to this he kept ever afterwards, and never made a sacrifice again. Now Hrafnkell sat at Hrafnkelsstaðir, raking money together fast. He became a much honoured man in the country-side, and every one chose to sit and stand as it pleased him. At that time there was a great going of ships from Norway to Iceland, and people were taking up claims in the country as fast as might be during Hrafnkell's days. No one might settle freely in Hrafnkell's country-side without his leave; and all those who settled had to promise him their aid, against which he promised his protection. Thus he brought under himself all the land on the eastern side of Lagarfljót. This jurisdiction soon became much more thickly peopled than that which he had ruled over before, stretching all the way up Skriðudal as well as up all along Lagarfljót. Now his mind, too, had undergone a change; he was much better liked than heretofore; he was still of the same temper as to helpful husbandry and lordly household ways; but now the man was much milder and meeker in all things than ever before. He and Sámr often met at public gatherings, but never a word fell betwixt them as to their former dealings. In this manner six winters passed away. Sámr also was well liked among his retainers, for he was gentle and quiet and ready to help, and bore in mind always the counsel which those brothers had given him; he, too, was a man of much splendour in outfit and raiment.

Chapter 17

It is stated that there came a certain ship into Reiðarfjörðr, the master of which was Eyvindr Bjarnason, who had been abroad for seven winters together. Eyvindr had bettered himself greatly as to manners, and had now become the briskest of men. Now he soon was told of the tidings which had come to pass, and he made as if he took little heed thereof, being a man of unmeddlesome ways. When Sámr heard this he rode to the ship, and a great joyful meeting there was between the brothers. Sámr asked him to come up west to his place, and Eyvindr accepted it, and bade Sámr ride home first, and afterwards send him horses for his chattels. He hauled his ship aland, and made her snug. Now Sámr did as Eyvindr bade, and went home, and had horses sent down to meet Eyvindr, and when he had made his chattels ready for the journey, he set off unto Hrafnkelsdalr, riding up along Reiðarfjörðr. They were five in company together, and a sixth there was, an attendant of Eyvindr, an Icelander by kin, and a relative of his. This youth Eyvindr had redeemed from poverty, and brought him now home in his own company, and had done to him as to himself, which good deed of Eyvindr was loudly praised, and the common talk was that few people could be found to match him. Now they rode up along Thorsdalsheiði, driving before them sixteen horses loaded. They were there together, two of Sámr's house-carls, and three of the sailors; all arrayed in vari-coloured clothes, and carrying glittering shields. They rode across Skriðudalr, and across the neck, over the country-side, and unto Fljótsdalr, to a spot called Bulunyarvellir, and thence unto the shingly flats of Gilsá -- a river that flows into the Fljot from the east, between Hallormsstaðr and Hrafnkelstaðir: then they rode up along Lagarfljót, down below the home-field of Hrafnkelsstaðir, and thus round the upper end of the water, crossing Jökulsá at the ford of Skali. This was midway between the hour of rising and the hour of day-meal (i.e. nine o'clock A.M.). A certain woman was there by the waterside washing her linen, and, seeing the men travelling, the handmaiden gathers up her linen and rushes homeward. The linen she threw down beside a certain pile of wood, running into the house herself. At this time Hrafnkell was not up as yet; his chosen men lay about in the hall, but the workmen had already gone each about his business, the time being the hay-making season. Now when the maiden came in she took up the wood, saying: "Sooth, indeed, are most of the old saws; 'so one grows craven as one grows old;' that honour mostly cometh to but little which, beginning early, is allowed to drop into dishonour, the bearer having no courage to wreak his right at any time, and such must be held a great wonder in a man who, once upon a time, has had bravery to boast of. Now the thing is changed; those who grow up with their fathers, and are deemed as of no worth against you, yet, when they grow up in another country, they are deemed of the greatest worth in whatsoever place they show themselves, and come back again from abroad and hold themselves better even than any chieftains. Now Eyvindr Bjarnarson has just crossed the river at the ford of Skuli, riding with a shield so fair that it beamed again; surely he is so much of a man as to be worth taking in revenge." These things the handmaiden said in great eagerness of temper. Hrafnkell rose and answered her: "May be the words thou speakest are only too true; not because that thou meanest anything good thereby; but it is well that thou have something for thy ado, and go forthwith, as hard as thou canst run, south to Viðivellir, to the sons of Hallsteinn, Sighvatr, and Snorri, and bid them at once come to me with as many men as they have about them able to bear weapons." Another handmaiden he sent down to Hrólfstadir to fetch the sons of Hrólfr, Thordr, and Halli, together with such men as might happen to be there able-bodied. All these were the stoutest of men, and were skilled in all manly parts. Hrafnkell also sent for his house-carls. And thus they were at last eighteen together. They armed themselves trustily, and rode across the river where the others had crossed it before.

Chapter 18

By this time Eyvindr and his men had got upon the heath, and on he rode until he had crossed the heath half-way, and had come to a spot called Bessagötur, where there is a boggy mire like a slough to ride through, where the horses waded all the way knee-deep, haunch-deep, or even belly-deep; but underneath the bottom was as hard as a frozen earth. On the western side of this bog is a large lava, and, when they got upon the lava, the youth looked back and said to Eyvindr: "Some men there be riding after us, no less than eighteen in number, among whom there is one, a big man on his horse, riding in blue raiment, and to me he seems to bear the likeness of Hrafnkell, the priest, although I have now not seen him for a long while." Eyvindr answered: "What is that to us? I know nothing whereby I need fear the anger of Hrafnkell, having never done aught to offend him. No doubt he has some errand into the next valley, desiring, may be, to go see his friends." The youth answered: "My mind bodes me that he be minded to meet thee." "I am not aware," says Eyvindr, "that aught has happened between him and my brother Sámr since their atonement." The youth answered: "I wish thou wouldst ride away west to the dale, where thou shalt be in safety; but I know so much of Hrafnkell’s temper, that he will do nothing to us, if he should miss thee; for, if thou alone be safe, then all things are well seen to; then there ’be no bear to tug along,’ and that is well, whatsoever may become of us." Eyvindr said he felt no desire to ride so hurriedly away, "for I know not who the men may be, and many a man would find a matter good to laugh at if I should run away before it came to any trial at all." Now they rode west over the lava, when they came upon another mire called Oxemire, a grassy spot, with bogs which are all but impassable. Hence old Hallfreðr struck the higher tracks, though they were longer. Now Eyvindr rode westward into the bog-land, where the horses came by, plentifully weltering in the mire; and they were much delayed because thereof. The others, riding loose, quickly covered the ground, and Hrafnkell and his men rode their way towards the bog-land. And just as Eyvindr had got over the bogs, he saw that there was come Hrafnkell and both his sons. Now Eyvindr’s men bade him ride away, now all trammels are past, "And thou wilt have time to reach Aðalból while the bog-land lies between thee and Hrafnkell." Eyvindr answered: "I mean not to fly away from any man to whom I never did any harm." So now they rode upon the neck of the land where some small hills rise above the ground. On this neck, spurring off from the mountain, there was a certain hummock and a windswept place surrounded by high banks. Up to this spot Eyvindr rode, and got there off his horse and waited for them. Then Eyvindr said: "Now we shall soon know their errand." After this they betook themselves up on to the hummock, where they broke up some stones. Now Hrafnkell turned off the road, making for the hummock. Without accosting Eyvindr with a word, he set on them forthwith. Eyvindr defended himself well and manfully; but his attendant, not deeming himself the stoutest of men for fighting, took his horse and rode west over the neck to Aðalból, and told Sámr what was going on. Sámr bestirred himself quickly, gathering men together, so that there was twenty of them in a band, and right well-armed following he had. Now Sámr rode eastward unto the heath, and to the spot where the fight had stood, and saw how matters had come about between them, and how Hrafnkell rode eastward again from his work; Eyvindr lying there fallen, and all his men. The first thing Sámr did, was to try if there still lingered life in the body of his brother, and carefully he was searched; but they had all lost their lives, five of them together. Of Hrafnkell’s men, twelve had fallen, but six had been able to ride away. Now Sámr made a short stay here, and rode, together with his men, in pursuit of Hrafnkell, who rode away as fast as they could on their weary horses. Then said Sámr: "We shall be able to overtake them, they having their horses jaded, ours being all fresh; yet it will be a hard thing to reach them, though, probably, if they cross the heath before, it will be at a close shave." At this time Hrafnkell had passed Oxemire again to the eastward.

Now both parties ride until Sámr reaches the brow of the heath, and saw that Hrafnkell had already got far down the slopes, and perceives that he will be able to fly away into the country-side, and said: "Now here we must return, for Hrafnkell will have no lack of men to help him." And so Sámr returns,

at things thus done, and came back to the spot where Eyvindr was lying, and set about throwing up a how over Eyvindr and his followers. In these parts, even to this day, the hummock is called Evindr-hummock, the mountains Eyvindr-hills, the valley Eyvindr-dale.

Chapter 19

Now Sámr brought all the chattels home to Aðalból; and when he came home Sámr sent for his retainers to be there with him the next morning by the hour of day-meal (9 o'clock A.M.), being minded to set off eastward over the heath, "And let our journey now take its own turn." In the evening Sámr went to bed, and a goodly gathering of people there was there. Hrafnkell rode home and told the tidings that had befallen. Having partaken of a repast, he gathers to him men, even to the number of seventy, with which gathering he rides west over the heath, and coming unawares upon Aðalból, he took Sámr in his bed, and had him brought out. Then Hrafnkell spoke : "Now thy conditions have come to such a pass, Sámr, as surely a short while ago thou wouldst not have believed, I having now in my hand the power of thy life. Yet I shall not deal with thee in more unmanly manner than thou didst to me. Now two conditions I put before thee -- one, to be slain; the other, that I settle and arrange all things between me and thee." Sámr said that he would rather choose to live, though he well knew that that condition would be hard enough. To that Hrafnkell bade him be sure to make up his mind, "For that is a requital I owe thee; and I should deal with thee better by half, if thou art worthy of it. Thou shalt be off from Aðalból, and betake thee to Leikskálar, and there set up thy house; thou shalt take with thee all the wealth that belonged to Eyvindr, but from hence thou shalt take with thee of money's worth, so much as thou didst bring hither; that only shalt thou bring away. I shall overtake again my priesthood, and my house, and my property; and great as I see the increase of my wealth has grown, thou shalt enjoy nought thereof notwithstanding; for Eyvindr, thy brother, no weregild shall be forthcoming, even for this reason, that thou didst plead so provokingly after thy kinsman: for thou hast, indeed, had plentiful weregild for Einarr, thy relation, in having enjoyed my rule and my wealth for six years together; but the slaying of Eyvindr and his men, I value no more than the mutilation wrought on me and my men. Thou didst drive me out of my country-side; but I am content that thou abide at Leikskálar; and that will do for thee, if thou rush not into over-boldness, that may bring about thy shame. My underling thou shalt remain while we are both alive. Be thou sure of this, too, that things shall fare the worse with thee, the more ill-dealings we have together." Now Sámr went away with his folk down to Leikskálar, and there set up his household. Now Hrafnkell committed his household of Aðalból to his chosen men and on Thórir, his son, he settled his house at Hrafnkelsstaðir; but he himself had the priesthood over all these country-sides, and his son Ásbjörn, being younger, remained with him.

Chapter 20

Now Sámr sat at Leikskálar this winter: he was few-spoken and unmeddlesome, and many people found that he was right ill-content with his lot. But in the winter, when the days began to lengthen, Sámr rode in company with another man, having a train of three horses, across the bridge, and thence onward across the heath of Möðrudalr; thence again across Jökulsá-of-the-Ferry, to Mývatn; thence across the Fljótsheiði, and past Ljósavatn's Pass, never halting on his way until he made Thorskafjörðr, where a good cheer was made for him. At that time Thorkell had just arrived from a journey abroad, having spent four winters together in foreign lands. Sámr stayed there for a week, giving himself some rest. He now told them of all the dealings between himself and Hrafnkell, and charged the brothers to lend him now, as afore, their aid and avail. This time Thorgeirr was chief spokesman on his own and his brother's behalf; said he was settled afar; "The way between us is a long way indeed, and before we left thee we thought we had made matters snug enough for thee, so much so, that it would have been an easy matter for thee to maintain thyself. But now things have

come to what I foretold thee, when thou gavest life to Hrafnkell, that that would be the matter of thy sorest regret. I urged thee to take Hrafnkell's life, but thou wantedst to have thy way. Now it is easy to see the disparity of wisdom there is between ye two: he allowing thee to sit in peace all along, and only seized the chance of attack when he saw his way to destroying him in whom he deemed there was a greater man than in thyself. Now we may nowise allow thy lucklessness to be the bringer-about of our ruin. Nor have we any such eager desire to plunge into a strife with Hrafnkell again, as that we should want to risk our honour in that matter again. But we are willing to offer thee to come here with all thy relatives, and are ready to afford thee our protection, shouldst thou find thy mind more at ease here, than in the neighbourhood of Hrafnkell." Sámr said he was not of a mind to close such a bargain; said he wanted to be home again, and bade them afford him relay-horses which was granted him forthwith. The brothers wanted to give Sámr good gifts, but he would take none such; rejoined only that they were men of little hearts. Now Sámr rode home unto his house of Leikskálar, where he lived unto old age, nor ever, as long as he lived, did he get a redress against Hrafnkell. But Hrafnkell sat at home and maintained his lordly title, until he died in his bed. His "how" is in Hrafnkelsdalr, down below Aðalból. In his "how" there was laid down great wealth, all his armour, and his good spear. His sons stepped into his rule; Thórir dwelling at Hrafnkelstaðir, and Ásbjörn at Áðalból; both owning the priesthood conjointly, and were deemed to be right mighty men of their hands. And here the tale of Hrafnkell cometh to a close.